

Is this the world that America made?

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When we explore the history of western civilization, the most notable political and cultural influences are due to the greatest empires of the time: Persia in the 500s-300s BCE, Macedonia in the 300s-(sort of)100s BCE, Rome in the 100s BCE-400s CE, Christian church in the 300s-present, Arab and Turkish Muslims in the 600s-1900s, Holy Roman Empire in the 800s-1700s, Spain in the 1500s-1800s, Britain in the 1600s-1900s.

In the 1900s, the United States was reluctantly drawn onto the world stage in a major role, diametrically transforming the policy, which had been established by George Washington, of not getting involved in European power struggles and wars.

The United States played a major role in World War 1 in bringing victory to the Allies, led by Britain, France, and Russia, against the Central Powers, led by Germany and Austria-Hungary.

More importantly, the United States played an essential role in defeating Nazi Germany in World War 2 and in destroying Communist USSR in the Cold War. What would the world be like today had the Nazis ruled Europe? What would the world be like today had the USSR been able to expand its influence and control without being limited by the United States?

Of special note, unlike all of the earlier major powers in history, in the 1900s the United States had no interest in conquering territory and in subjugating peoples to its rule. Instead, the United States sought to promote the values of democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of commerce.

What would the world be like today if the major power of the 1900s had not represented these values? What would the world be like today if the major power had represented the values of the Nazis? What would the world be like today if the major power had represented the values of Communism?

The hallmark of Nazism was to subjugate and destroy peoples who were identified as inferior to members of the hypothetical Aryan race. The hallmark of Communism is that its rulers turn a country into a gigantic prison. They imprison anyone who tries to oppose the system, and they murder anyone who simply wishes to get out of the system.

By contrast, today the country that is most desirable to live in, all things considered, is the United States because of the opportunities that are available here due to the freedoms that we value here: democracy, freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of commerce.

Robert Kagan explores these issues in his book *The World America Made* (2012). In this meeting, we will analyze these issues in light of our knowledge of world history and in light of the arguments advanced by Robert Kagan.

Perspective

I wish to offer perspective on this opportunity for analysis and discussion.

I invite you to consider any person whom you admire and respect. Now ask yourself the following questions. Do you admire everything about their personality? Do you respect everything that they have done? If you know enough about their life, the answers to these questions are certain to be *no*.

As humans, we are well aware that any given individual has deficiencies that we do not admire and respect, and this includes ourself. As a result, in order to competently evaluate people, including ourself,

we must identify our goal tree. Our goal tree, in turn, reveals our values and their mutual relationships. In order to evaluate people, accordingly, we evaluate them in terms of our goal tree.

Furthermore, we will, to some extent, modify our goal tree to suit the situation of the person of interest. As they say, hindsight is 20/20. More specifically, in living our life, we base decisions on knowledge that is available to us today, and we employ values that we have assimilated from our immediate culture. In this light, we cannot realistically transplant ourself into the past and expect a person of that time and place to think like we do today. The best that we can do is examine the knowledge that was available to people at that time and examine the viewpoints of other people of the time in order to try to determine viable alternatives to the actions of people of the past. I did this in analyzing the cause of the Civil War and Lincoln's role in that cause.

Now, in order to make a realistic and competent evaluation of the role of a country, such as the United States, we must use the same approach, and this is what we will be doing in this discussion.

Meeting format

We will discuss the foregoing concerns, and we will cover all facets of interest to the participants. But note that I will take care to keep the discussion on the main topic for the main part of the meeting. Also note that this topic pertains to a realistic and competent analysis of history. It does not pertain to idealistic fantasies about what could have been.